

Call of the Hunt

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Call of the Hunt

by [nyxite](#)

Summary

It's been three years since John "Soap" MacTavish avenged the murder of his friend and Vanguard, Phillip Graves. Three years since he put a bullet between Simon Riley's eyes. But nothing stays buried out on the Tangled Shore - not even the dead. A new threat has Soap working alongside the mysterious freelancer named Ghost who wears a familiar face beneath his mask.

It's been three years since Ghost woke up with no memories and a face that gets him shot on sight. Alone and hunted in a world he doesn't understand, he accepts crime lord Roba's offer of sanctuary without question. Now, he's suffering for that trust beneath a debt he can't hope to repay. His one way out might just be the loud-mouthed sergeant who seems dead set on breaking down his walls - but as with all things, freedom will come at a price.

Allies or Enemies

Chapter Summary

Ghost's first resurrection || Soap meets Ghost

Chapter Notes

For those of you who haven't played Destiny but this story still sounds interesting, here's the elevator pitch to get you started: In the post-post-apocalyptic solar system, tiny sentient drones called Ghosts (no relation to CoD Ghost) choose human corpses to revive as Lightbearers, who have special abilities and can die and be reborn. BUT the first resurrection wipes the Lightbearer's memory of their past life. Most Lightbearers are soldiers called Guardians, defending the last of humanity on Earth, but some wander farther afield...

A more extensive glossary of terms can be found in the end notes!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Three years ago.

Mouth dry. Head aching. Rust under his tongue.

He picks himself up slowly, gritting his teeth against the soreness all through his muscles. His hands automatically skim over his body, checking for injuries. To his surprise, there aren't any. But hadn't he just been—?

The thought goes nowhere. More than that, it feels...severed, like a ship unmoored. Something had happened to him, he's sure of it. Something bad.

But he's fine. A little stiff, a little dehydrated. But fine.

"...Guardian? U-um, eyes up, Guardian!"

He flinches at the unfamiliar voice—close, too close, he hadn't even noticed someone was there—and he whips a sidearm from the holster on his hip. His hands are steady as he aims the weapon, glaring down its sights. But there's no one there. Just an odd little drone the size of his fist. It looks like some sort of strange, mechanical flower with a

flickering blue light at the center, swiveling like an eye.

As the man levels the gun, the drone makes a noise of alarm, its metal plates flaring in an oddly expressive manner. Its voice is nervous and ever so slightly staticky.

“Ah! No, no, don’t be scared! I’m not here to hurt you. Um, the opposite, actually... Now that you’re alive again, I can heal you up whenever you need!”

“*What?*” The man winces at the dry scrape of his own voice. He clears his throat, gripping the pistol more firmly. “What are you? What—what happened to me?”

“It’s okay to be confused,” the drone assures him, despite the fact that he feels less confused and more angry. “You just came back from the dead, so you’ll be a little disoriented.”

“Came back from—?”

He doesn’t get to finish his question before he’s interrupted by a high, rough-throated howl in the distance. The hairs on his arms and the back of his neck stand on end.

The drone seems to flinch. “I can answer all your questions, but we need to get out of here. This is Fallen territory. It’s not safe!”

The man finally lowers the pistol. Whatever the little drone is, it doesn’t seem dangerous. He gives it a short nod in confirmation and peels himself up off the ground, finally getting a good look at his surroundings. He’s standing on an immense, rocky expanse, bare except for a few crumbling concrete buildings. The sky is full of hazy purple nebula, pierced only weakly by a pinprick of sun.

The Reef, the man’s mind provides. Something deep in his gut tugs for his attention. Is this home?

He presses the thought, but just like before, it seems disconnected from any source. Where *is* home, then? He can’t remember. Can’t remember anything...

“Come on, we have to move!”

The drone catches his attention again as it darts across the terrain, floating without any visible form of propulsion. That seems a little weird, but the man doesn’t stop to question it. Another howl splits the

air, and he takes off after his companion.

They're almost to one of the run-down buildings when there's a hiss of discharged electricity and a rock nearby explodes in a shower of fragments and crackling blue light. The man swears, ducking to avoid the worst of it, and risks a glance back over his shoulder.

Not too far away, and definitely getting closer, are four strange, cowed figures bristling with guns and knives. Some of them have too many arms. When one figure pauses to aim down sights at the man, he quickly dodges under the cover of a nearby boulder.

Another hiss and crackle of energy pass over him. The man's heart is racing—that's where his *head* was not one second ago—and his adrenaline levels aren't helped by the drone's panicked voice in his ear whispering, "Oh Traveler, oh fuck, oh no."

The man looks down at the sidearm he still has drawn. He checks the magazine with a sharp, practiced motion. Four bullets.

He pats himself down for additional mags, another weapon, anything. He finds only his clothes (tattered and dirty) and an admittedly decent-looking knife with some kind of symbol emblazoned on the sheath.

Four shots to kill four hostiles, his mind calculates. At this range? Doable.

"Quiet," he growls at the drone next to him. It immediately shuts up, which helps his focus immensely.

Leaning just slightly out of cover, he's accosted by a hail of gunfire. He yanks himself back from danger.

"You could try a grenade," the drone whispers.

The man grunts and shakes his head. "Don't have any."

"No, no," the drone says, bobbing in the air. "Use the Light. You can feel it, can't you? The power beneath your skin?"

The man's brow furrows. What the fuck is this little shit on about? Before he can figure it out, a clawed hand grabs him by the neck of his shirt and hauls him out from cover.

Instinct takes over. He lashes out with his empty hand, knowing only

that he has to kill or be killed.

A cool, almost numb sensation flows down his arm and into his fingers just as he makes contact with a hard exoskeleton. To his surprise, he hears a crunch and a shriek. The claws on his clothing slip free, and he lunges back into cover as a large body hits the ground behind him.

His eyes find his opponent, and he goes still.

The creature is lightly clothed and armored, but it's still very obviously not human. Its head is the wrong shape, almost a triangular muzzle, with too many eyes and too-sharp teeth. And its arms—all four of them—are pressed over its stomach, where the man can just see a single, small slit. Like a stab wound.

Then he looks down at his formerly empty hand. A blade of violet light shines in his grasp, cool against his fingers. He knows, instinctually, that this knife is his, created by his will.

The four-armed creature begins to struggle to its feet. Again, the man reacts instinctually, throwing the blade of light with deadly accuracy. It lodges to the hilt in the creature's throat and, as though that wasn't enough, bursts apart in a whisper-quiet flash of purple. The creature's body is ripped apart as if the molecules themselves are unraveling, leaving nothing but a few drifting violet sparks behind.

"Fucking hell..." the man breathes.

"I mean, I guess that works too," the drone's voice says behind him. "Try a grenade next time, though."

Next time implies that he's expected to live through the next ten minutes. Which, from the sounds of skittering footsteps nearby, is still up in the air.

He thinks he should be scared. He's still outnumbered three to one by these things, and those guns didn't seem like they would exactly tickle. But he doesn't feel scared.

He feels powerful.

Cocking his pistol, he dives out from cover again. Despite the motion, his hands remain rock-steady on the gun. His aim doesn't waver for a second, snapping immediately to the three remaining creatures. His first shot punches through one's head. His second is a solid body shot, and by the time the final creature has fumbled its gun into position,

he's already lunging forward with his combat knife.

Despite the lack of human anatomy, he figures the throat is still a viable target. And as blue-black blood cascades over the front of his clothes, it turns out he was right.

He stands over the corpses for a minute, staring, taking in the details of their insect-like build and the scrap-work armor they wear. Adrenaline fades from his veins, and he realizes that not only is he uninjured, but he hasn't broken a sweat.

Vaguely aware of the drone drifting up behind him, he asks, "What the hell am I?"

The drone moves to nudge his shoulder, and he swats it away with a scowl. It seems to get the message and retreats a couple feet.

"You're a Lightbearer," it says. "One of humanity's chosen. When I found your remains, I knew you were the one for me."

He turns to glare at the thing and kneels to wipe his knife clean on one of the creatures' cowls. "So what the hell are you?"

The drone's plates click together in a manner that makes the man feel like he's being frowned at. "I'm a Ghost. An inorganic intelligence created by the Traveler, born into this world to bring the power of the Light to a single, worthy individual. You."

Six more questions spring to mind, but before the man can ask any of them, he hears another high, hoarse cry in the distance.

"...Bloody fucking hell," he growls. "We need to move. Where can we find shelter nearby?"

The drone dips in the air and flits a few inches towards one of the dusty, crumbling buildings. "There. I passed by while I was searching for your corpse. It's empty."

The man squints, studying the indicated structure. "Good vantage," he murmurs. "Two, maybe three points of entry if those things can climb. It'll do."

"They're called the Fallen," the drone chirps as the man starts forward. "Well, they call themselves 'eliksni', so you can really use either."

The man doesn't acknowledge the information. "And what are you called?"

The drone twists in the air with a pleased chirp. "I don't have a name! I wanted my Lightbearer to name me."

"...Did you now."

"Yep! So you can pick out whatever you want to call me!"

The man rolls his eyes. He's only known himself a short while, but he's already certain that he's not really a creative type. "What about me? Do I have a name?"

"Nope! You're a newborn Lightbearer, so you won't have any memories of your previous life. That means you're a blank slate. A fresh start."

"Perfect," he mumbles. He thinks for a moment. "What did you say before? Ghost? I like that one."

The drone stops for a moment, then makes a dissatisfied noise. "You can't be Ghost; *I'm* the Ghost."

The faintest of smiles lifts the man's lips. "You can be Phantom or something, then."

The drone makes a staticky sound almost like a sigh. "Fine, if that's what you want. Pleased to meet you, Ghost."

Now.

Soap's having a fantastic day.

Normally, he'd be excited to hear that his help was requested by Captain Price, but his spirits were quickly dashed by the news that followed. Price, one of the most legendary and powerful warlocks to have ever existed, had lost his Ghost to the Hive. The message he sent to the Vanguard said only that he'd been in pursuit of an exceptionally dangerous Hive knight on Luna when a coven of Hive wizards ambushed him. His Ghost, Bella, had sacrificed her life to save his. Now Price was trapped somewhere in the Temple of Crota, alone and Lightless, with no Ghost to rez him should he die.

Soap was on leave when the news came in, taking a well-earned break

from freezing his ass off on Europa with the rest of Fireteam 141. Laswell was the one to get in touch, admitting that this mission would be dangerous for a lone Guardian, but that no other Lightbearers of Soap's caliber were available. And Price had requested him by name.

With the promise of future extended leave (and a good deal of swearing when he turned off the comm), Soap set out to collect his gear, fuel his jumpship, and make the short jump between Earth and Luna.

Looking out the cockpit of his jumpship as he cruised through low Luna atmo, Soap felt a twinge of familiar dread. Nothing good, he's pretty sure, has *ever* happened on Luna, and certainly not to him. The massive cracks spanning the lunar crust shine from within with a sickly green light, betraying the Hive rot at the moon's core. But the real danger, he knows, goes deeper than marauding Hive.

He brings the ship around to the mouth of the temple, an ancient Hive structure carved into the lunar stone like an ants' burrow. His Ghost, Tad, transmats him down to the surface.

The moment his boots hit moondust, he picks up the growl of Hive nearby.

Weapons loose, Tad says in his mind. Price is much farther in, and we're the only other friendlies in the area.

Confirmation granted, Soap brings his auto rifle to bear against the thralls and acolytes that swarm out of the temple's mouth like so many insects. The sharp crack of gunfire splits the quiet lunar night.

"They're just linin' up for it," Soap says with a smirk. The first wave of Hive fall beneath the hail of bullets, pale corpses collapsing against the dark stone.

Twin shrieks rend the air, and Soap feels a chill down the back of his neck. He dives behind a boulder just in time to avoid the swarm of arc bolts that scream toward his position.

Two wizards at the entrance, Tad reports.

"Ye think??" Soap snaps. "Aye, well, they'll hafta choke on this."

Summoning his Light, he forms a globe of solar energy between his palms and flings it towards the temple's mouth. He ducks back into cover, but still feels the ground tremble with the explosion that

follows.

Successful detonation, Tad reports, and Soap can feel her gleeful excitement. *The wizards are down! Now's your chance.*

Moon rocks skitter beneath his feet as Soap sprints for the entrance, auto rifle traded for a shotgun. As he clears the threshold, a burst of void energy nearly catches him off-guard. He swears, dodges, and brings his weapon up to target the massive ogre.

Three rounds discharge directly into the creature's massive eye socket. There's a burst of gore and transparent fluid, and the ogre keels over in an avalanche of tattered flesh. Soap bares his teeth in a savage grin and presses on.

"Price!" he calls over comms. "Where are ye?"

"Third level," comes the terse response. *"Careful, I've seen that Hive knight skulking about."*

"Copy," Soap affirms. "Clearing second level now."

It's a good reminder, he thinks as he wades through the horde, that he's not just a Lightbearer, not just a Guardian. He's *the* Guardian, Kingslayer, the Young Wolf, Hero of the Red War. Soap may be young by Guardian standards—only nine years since his first rez—but he's up there with the best. Even John Price knows his name (and ever since Soap helped rescue Nikolai from the Infinite Forest, he's had the feeling that Price might even trust him).

His confidence only falters when he starts to run out of ammo.

Pressing his back to a support pillar, Soap hisses in pain as an acolyte grazes his arm with a shot.

Get that for me, Tad? he thinks, and immediately the Ghost compiles nearby to begin healing him.

He peeks out from behind the pillar. Almost to the third level, but there's a small army crowding the stairs. As with most Hive architecture, the way down is symmetrical but disturbingly organic, providing plenty of alcoves for his enemies to use as cover.

"Price, I may be a wee bit late."

"Don't worry!" a new voice chirps from comms. *"We've got it handled."*

Oh! Watch out for the big knight with the face scar, he's a nasty one!"

"Are you another Guardian?" Soap demands, reloading his auto rifle with quick, practiced movements.

"My name is Phantom! I'm a Ghost."

"Tell yer Lightbearer to get down to the third level! There's a Lightless pinned down under fire!"

"We're almost there!" the voice confirms. *"We should be drawing a bit of fire off you both right about...now!"*

The air around Soap trembles with the deep, echoing sound of a void anchor being fired. Suddenly the horde in front of him dissolves into chaos as the Hive are yanked backwards by the irresistible pull of a Nightstalker's super. Soap whoops in delight and ducks out from cover, letting his own Light rush down his arms into his hands, forming a blazing gold revolver. He brings his Golden Gun to bear on the tethered Hive, taking down six of the biggest ones in a hail of precise, rapid fire. The bright solar energy is deliciously radiant against the dark purple of the mysterious Lightbearer's tether, and the two seem to react to one another in a sparkling, hissing display of clashing opposites. There's a flare of pure white light before the entire temple shakes with the rumble of a detonation.

When Soap blinks his eyes clear of spots, he feels a slow grin form on his face. The Hive have scattered, the few survivors fleeing the wrath of two Lightbearers combined.

"Thanks for the assist," Soap calls out. He makes his way down the stairs to the third level, spotting the other Lightbearer immediately.

He's tall and broad-shouldered, wearing mismatched armor that doesn't do his apparently remarkable talents any justice. Beyond that, Soap is curious to see that this Lightbearer wears a mask, a black balaclava with a white skull stitched to the front. Only the Lightbearer's eyes are visible, dark and wary as he watches Soap's movements.

"That was a hell of an introduction," Soap continues, grinning. The other Lightbearer doesn't respond, so he presses. "Ye got a name?"

A Ghost with a black, flower-shaped shell compiles near the Lightbearer and gives his shoulder a nudge. "Go on," she whispers. "Introduce yourself."

There's a long pause, and Soap's about to interject with a joke to ease the tension when the masked Lightbearer finally speaks.

"They call me Ghost."

His voice is deep and gravelly, pitched with an accent Soap is used to hearing on the furthest fringes of the Reef. The effect is quite striking, and Soap tamps down a pleased shiver.

"Ghost, eh?" he says, smile going crooked. "And yer Ghost's name is Phantom...?"

The masked Lightbearer crosses his arms, those glinting amber eyes narrowing. "Got a problem?"

Not the joking type, apparently, Soap thinks with an inner sigh. Out loud, he says, "No problem here. Have ye seen Price?"

Ghost shakes his head, the movement stiff. Soap wishes he could see the man's face.

"Negative. He's somewhere up ahead."

"Aye, let's get movin', then."

As they make their way through the warrens of the temple together, Soap starts to get the feeling he's seen this Lightbearer before. Something about his voice...?

"Laswell didn't say she was sendin' another Guardian," Soap says cautiously as they move.

"Not a Guardian," Ghost replies simply. "Never been to the Last City."

Soap pauses, surprised. "A freelancer, then?"

"Something like that."

Soap checks the magazine on his auto rifle. "You a criminal?"

"Affirmative."

He swears he can hear just the hint of a smile in Ghost's voice. He rolls his eyes. So *now* he can joke?

They make it to the end of the third level only to find another horde waiting for them. Fortunately—or perhaps unfortunately—the Hive's

attention is fixed on a balcony fifteen feet up, where a lone figure is taking shots at them from cover.

“Price!” Soap calls. He hopes to draw some of the heat off the Lightless man, and it works. A ripple goes through the gathered swarm, many of them turning to face the new threat. In particular, a massive, chitinous Hive knight lifts a bone-white cleaver the size of Soap’s entire body. The creature is scarred from past battles, one of its three eyes bisected by a deep crack in its faceplates.

It opens its maw and bellows a challenge.

Soap racks his shotgun, grinning, only to glance over and find that Ghost has vanished, nowhere to be seen. A twitch of irritation heats his chest. “C’mon, we were gettin’ along so well!”

There’s no response, not that Soap expected one, and there’s no time to dwell on where the other Lightbearer might have skulked off to. There are Hive to kill, and Soap does so with style.

He meets the horde head-on, blowing apart three-eyed skulls in bursts of chitin and brain matter with his shotgun. When he runs the magazine dry, he simply tosses the gun aside for Tad to transmat away and starts throwing grenades instead, delighting in the explosions of golden solar Light as he dodges and weaves through the swarm of howling mouths and claws. By the time his Light is tapped out, there’s another gun in his hands, and the dance repeats.

Through it all, the massive, scarred Hive knight strides steadily forward, each footfall shaking the cavernous room. Soap keeps an eye on him—and his enormous, bone-white sword.

The sword hews out, then in again, the jagged edge screaming as it rips through the air toward Soap’s neck. Soap dives just beneath the swing, feeling the energy for another Golden Gun racing down his arms—

I AM THE UNMAKER.

What the f—

I AM THE BLOOD-GORGED BEAST.

Something is screaming inside Soap’s head, and it’s not his Ghost. With a rush of nausea, he feels the sweetness of his battle-high being twisted, misaligned. His Light flares within him, rearing like a hound

catching a scent. The warmth of the solar energy gathering in his hands becomes hot, then searing, eating at his body from the inside. It feels like he's being ripped apart. It feels like he's about to explode. It feels...

Intoxicating.

He laughs, or maybe he screams. The power swelling inside him is a terrible, unbearable, beautiful song. His war-drum heart thunders in his chest. On his knees, skin tight with fever, he reaches with empty hands for the Hive knight's blessing.

The creature raises its sword.

I AM THE END OF ALL. I AM—

The song falters. The knight's body jerks as two points of violet light burst from its chest—twin blades made of pure void energy.

Soap watches in a daze as the knight falls to one knee. A deep snarl makes it past the creature's serrated teeth as its glowing eyes meet Soap's. Soap doesn't know the Hive's language, but he feels his stomach drop at the hatred in that gaze.

A promise of vengeance simmers in the air.

The two void knives rip free of the knight in a spray of black ichor. The knight collapses in a flare of green fire and vanishes, leaving behind only the smell of rot—and Soap's sinking realization that something has gone entirely wrong.

In place of the knight stands Ghost, looking much worse for wear with deep rends in his armor. But what catches and holds Soap's attention is the shredded remains of the man's mask. Behind the tattered cloth, a dreadfully familiar face glares down at him. Amber eyes. Pale brows. A sharp-edged scowl.

Simon fucking Riley. The man who murdered Phillip Graves.

Soap lifts his gun.

Chapter End Notes

So uh yeah welcome to Call of Destiny, an incredibly dumb idea I came up with while trying to take a nap. I don't think anyone will read this, so let me know if you made it all the way through!

Awoken - Humans slightly altered by exposure to paracausal (magic) forces. They have skin tones ranging from blue to purple to grey and their eyes glow. Can be raised as Lightbearers.

Class - Loose grouping of Lightbearers who exhibit specific talents: Hunters (Gunslingers, Arcstriders, and Nightstalkers) are swift, agile, and precise; Titans (Sunbreakers, Strikers, and Sentinels) are stoic, determined, and passionate; Warlocks (Dawnblades, Stormcallers, and Voidwalkers) are intelligent, intuitive, and creative.

The Darkness - A paracausal (magical) force that opposes the Light. Generally believed to be "bad" by humanity and Fallen/eliksni.

Element - There are three main physical manifestations of the Light: arc (lightning), solar (fire), and void (vacuum or gravity). Some Lightbearers have stronger affinities towards one or another. Some weapons make use of these energies, too.

Fallen/Eliksni - An alien race of pirates and scavengers, constantly at war with humanity. They usually have four arms, and those with fewer are looked down on.

Ghost (creature) - A non-organic, paracausal being created by the Traveler to raise humanity's dead as Lightbearers. Once they choose a Lightbearer, they are bonded until the Ghost is killed. Ghosts can store physical items as a digital memory in their "inventory" after taking time to scan the item. Ghosts can also "decompile" (vanish) into their Lightbearer's Light, where they maintain awareness of their surroundings but can't be detected from outside. Ghosts and their Lightbearers share a psychic bond referred to as neural symbiosis, which they can use to communicate silently.

Guardian - A Lightbearer who chooses to defend humanity and its interests. Mostly found in the Last City.

The Hive - A race of alien warmongers who worship the Darkness and can channel its power. Known for their different "morphs" (including knights, wizards, ogres, and more), each with its own physiology and strengths.

Jumpship - A small to medium sized spaceship that can make "jumps" at near-light speed.

Last City - A sprawling, walled city containing most of humanity's remnants on Earth. Protected by the Guardians.

Lightbearer - A human (or neohuman - see Awoken and Exo) chosen by a Ghost to be raised from the dead. They are granted

special powers through the Light and can be resurrected from even the messiest deaths, so long as their Ghost survives. Lightbearers do not remember their first life (before their Ghost found their corpse).

The Light - A paracausal (magical) force that comes from the Traveler. Generally believed to be "good" by humanity and Fallen/eliksni.

The Reef - A vast, cluttered expanse of the asteroid belt dotted with habitats, space stations, shipwrecks, and hidden colonies. Contested territory between the Awoken people and the eliksni. Infested with Scorn.

Tangled Shore - A particularly lawless expanse of the Reef, ruled over by "Baron" Roba.

The Traveler - A mysterious, moon-sized machine from which the Light and all Ghosts originate. Currently parked in the sky over the Last City.

Vanguard - The leadership of the Guardians of the Last City. There are (or were) one for each Lightbearer class (see Class): A Hunter Vanguard (formerly Phillip Graves), a Titan Vanguard (Shepherd), and a Warlock Vanguard (Kate Laswell).

Shadows and Echoes

Chapter Summary

A betrayal || A reunion

Chapter Notes

I would like to humbly thank everyone who left comments and kudos. You inspired me to write 4,000 words in one day, so please accept this second chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Three years ago.

“There he is, my favorite Guardian!”

Soap grins and clasps Graves’ arm in greeting. “I bet ye say that to all yer sergeants.”

Graves claps him on the shoulder before drawing back, warm eyes crinkling in amusement. “Maybe, but you’re the only one I mean it with. Don’t tell your buddy Roach. Now! Did you get a chance to go over the briefing on the jump here?”

Soap looks around the landing bay, noticing a small amount of flaming debris and the distant shouts of someone very, very angry. “Might’ve skimmed it,” he admits. “Prison riot, deadly force authorized?”

“But discouraged,” a new voice cuts in. Striding towards them is a tall, broad-shouldered Awoken man with gleaming amber eyes. He’s dressed in a Corsair officer’s armor, a pistol and a knife on his belt.

Soap turns to face the man with a forced smile. “Lieutenant Riley. We’ve gotta stop meeting like this.”

Riley scowls and folds well-muscled arms over his chest. Graves glances from him to Soap.

“I guess if you two know each other, there’s no need for introductions. Soap, Lieutenant Riley’s here on behalf of the Awoken Queen, and he’ll be our guide through the prison. We’re all in on this mission together, alright?”

Soap's eyes narrow slightly at Riley. "Aye, we're all friends here, sir."

Graves briefly looks like he's going to press Soap on the sarcastic remark, but ultimately just shakes his head. "Okay, we'll start at the upper levels and work our way down. Remember, we want these guys back in their cages, but if you're pressed, you have execute authority. Now, let's move out! We're burning daylight here!"

Riley gives a sharp nod and takes point, leading the way out of the landing bay with his pistol drawn. Soap starts after him, only to be brought up short by Graves.

"Soap, I wanna be up front with you," Graves murmurs. "Things've been pretty shaky between the Awoken and the City recently. This here's a good chance to patch up some lingering tensions." He glances up ahead at Riley's retreating figure. "That said, I do not like it when the Awoken Queen brings this particular piece into play. Stay sharp, kid."

Soap follows his gaze to where Riley is punching in the door code. He remembers working loosely alongside the man previously, back when the Awoken and the City were closer. Simon Riley was the Queen's go-to answer for any problem that needed to be solved with violence. He had a reputation as impressive as Soap's own, with more years of service to back it up. Of course, this made the man unbearably arrogant and antisocial. Something about him had always rubbed Soap the wrong way.

"Are ye telling me not to trust him, sir?"

Graves gives Soap's shoulder another pat. "I'm telling you to be ready for anything, Guardian. Now, let's get in there and show this crowd what we're made of."

It's going so well, until suddenly it isn't.

Together, the three of them clear the upper levels without much of a fuss. Soap is curious to see Riley in action, and is grudgingly impressed by what he observes. The Lieutenant moves completely silently, like a shadow made flesh. Soap was initially skeptical of his choice of weapons, but now the sidearm and knife make sense. Riley is an ambush predator, and he's very, very good at what he does. The man also seems completely fearless, despite not having the Light or a Ghost to back him up or save him from death.

“Clear,” Riley says, nodding down a hallway. “But from what I can tell, someone’s gotten into the command center up ahead. Lucky for us, he’s completely incompetent, or we’d have been gunned down by the sentry turrets by now.”

Soap glances at one of the turrets, inactive with its guns at rest. “What’s wrong with the security systems, anyways?”

“Something scrambled the main computer bank and infected the servitors,” Riley says with a grim set to his jaw. “It’s like the whole prison caught a fuckin’ virus.”

Graves keeps pace, a wary look on his face. “Has to be intentional, right? This whole thing—”

He breaks off as a guttural warcry sounds behind them. Soap whips around to see an enormous Cabal charging down the hallway towards them, a sword-like piece of scrap metal in each hand. Graves’ gun goes off, and the Cabal’s head bursts like an overripe melon. Graves doesn’t even pause in his stride.

“—This whole thing seems awfully convenient to be a glitch. Smells like an inside job to me.”

“One of the wardens is unaccounted for,” Riley admits. “Could be involved, could just be dead. Hold here.”

They’ve reached the center of the prison, a circular shaft burrowing deep into the asteroid. Countless hallways and catwalks branch off at different levels and angles. Soap feels his gut clench as he leans ever so slightly over the railing. It’s a long way down.

“That’s the command center,” Riley says, jutting his chin at a large fixture suspended over the middle of the pit. Just great.

Graves checks his weapons, then nods. “We get you in there, can you un-fuck this mess?”

“I can damn well try.” Riley pulls out a datapad and taps out a line of code. “There. The two of you should be authorized as wardens now, greenlighting access to all doors on base. I’ll need one of you to help open the command center and the other to provide covering fire if anyone tries anything.”

Graves nods. “Soap, you’re on overwatch. Keep us covered.”

“Yes sir,” Soap says with a sharp nod. Tad transmats a pulse rifle into his hands.

“Oh, and Soap?” Graves gives him a wicked grin. “Go ahead and show off a bit. No need to hold back.”

Soap returns the grin, already feeling the solar energy restlessly stir inside him. “Yes sir.”

As soon as they hit the catwalks, in full view of the rest of the prison, a roar goes up around them. Freed prisoners boil out to meet them, brandishing actual weapons that catch Soap off-guard. He hears Riley curse as bullets and arc projectiles start to rain down.

“Someone found the fuckin’ weapons locker. Soap!”

“I’m on ‘em,” Soap says. Most of the fire comes from a group just above them. Soap draws on his Light, pulling it down his arm until he’s holding a roaring sphere of solar energy. Gently, lovingly, he lobs it towards the gunmen.

Unlike tech grenades, Soap’s Light grenades act as an extension of his will. They burn where he wants, when he wants, and who he wants. So when one of the gunmen moves to catch the radiant sphere—no doubt planning to throw it back at its creator—Soap simply blinks and watches the exquisite bloom of golden fire wipe out the entire group.

Soap has always loved his Light. He loves the way it hums beneath his skin, filling him with energy when a normal man would flag. He loves the finesse and agility it gives him, allowing him to kick off empty air as he bounds after his enemies. And he loves the rush of warmth as he shapes it into explosive form.

He’s everywhere at once, if not with his body then with his bullets and Light. He’s no titan, no bulwark of force against the tides of adversaries, but he is a weapon, and a damn good one at that. With Tad watching his six and pinging enemy locations, Soap almost feels as though he could do this dance with his eyes closed.

It takes only a minute to get the door open. In that time, Soap clears out every single hostile that dares to show their face.

His feet land lightly back on the catwalk as the door’s locks click open. Riley is watching him with an odd, almost hungry expression. Soap’s not sure what his problem is, so he offers him a smirk and a wink. It has the intended effect of making the man roll his eyes and

look elsewhere.

As the door opens, Soap is expecting an eliksni, or maybe even a Cabal, but instead he finds himself making eye contact with three startled Awoken. He hesitates on the trigger. In the time it takes for the three Awoken to raise their weapons, Graves has executed all three with rapid, hip-fired shots from his hand cannon.

As three bodies slump to the ground, Riley turns on Graves with a scowl. "We could have interrogated them."

Graves gives his gun a flashy spin as he holsters it. "Wasn't worth the risk. Are you gonna fix the system or what?"

Riley isn't listening, moving instead to examine the bodies. Soap notices all three wear armor, and their weapons look nothing like the stolen arms the rest of the inmates bore.

"They weren't prisoners," he blurts out.

Riley looks up sharply, eyes narrowed. "No, they weren't. And they weren't wardens, either."

Graves nudges one body with his boot, then levels his gaze at Riley. "What's going on, Lieutenant?"

Riley's jaw works tightly for a moment before he inhales sharply. "Fuck. This isn't a prison riot. It's a prison *break*."

He storms over to a table of displays and switches, tapping something in on a keyboard. Whatever he gets in response causes him to swear again.

"There's an unknown craft docked at the Level 0 bay. I can't shut it down remotely, not with whatever the hell these fuckers did to the servitors." He straightens, turning to Graves and Soap. "I'm going down there. The inmates on the lower levels can't be allowed to escape."

"There's a Level 0 bay?" Soap demands. "What the hell for?"

"Classified," Riley snaps. "You two, stay here and try to trip security protocols. Our best chance is to prevent that craft from leaving."

He pushes past, breaking into a run as he heads for the lift. Soap starts to move after him, another protest on his lips, but Graves holds out an

arm to stop him.

“I’ve got a bad feeling about this one,” Graves says. “Stay here, try to get security back online like he said. I’m following this shady fucker.”

Graves isn’t the only one with a bad feeling. Soap feels a shiver of dread run through his chest.

“Do ye know what prisoners are on Level 0?” he asks.

Graves is checking over his gear as he answers. “Nope. The Awoken keep their records pretty hush-hush. Let’s just hope they don’t have a Hive God down there.”

Soap manages a smile. “If they do, ye know who tae call.”

Graves chuckles and claps a hand on Soap’s shoulder one last time. “Damn straight, I do. Keep your head, Soap. This’ll get ugly before it gets better.”

“Aye, sir.”

He watches Graves stride out onto the catwalk. Instead of heading for the lift like Riley, he takes the more direct approach and simply hops the railing, plummeting out of sight.

Letting out a long exhale, Soap closes the command center’s door and focuses on the controls. “Alright, Tad,” he mutters. “Walk me through this.”

It turns out the three Awoken left the computer in a tangled snarl of digital mess. Soap is surprised *anything* in the prison still functions. Tad interfaces directly with the computer while relaying instructions to Soap on what to enter manually. It takes far longer than Soap would like to start the repairs proper, and finally Tad makes a noise of frustration.

“I’ve got an algorithm working on unencrypting the locks on the landing bay controls, but it’ll take time. Maybe longer than we have.”

“Is there anything ye can do?” Soap asks, leg bouncing with nerves.

Tad turns again to the computer, fidgets for a moment, then shakes her shell no. “Let’s just hope Riley and Graves can buy us some time.”

An idea occurs to Soap. “While yer gadget’s doing its thing, can we retake the security cameras?”

Tad makes a hum of determination and sets to work again. It takes several more agonizing minutes, but at last she manages to bring up security footage of what's happening on the lower levels.

Clicking through the feeds, Soap pauses when he finds one showing a number of Awoken hurrying down a corridor. These are dressed in prisoner's uniforms, and Soap's gut clenches to see who's leading them.

"Tad," he says in an even voice, "come look at this and tell me we're seein' the same thing."

She does, darting over to peer at the screen. There, gun in hand, prison uniform clinging to his gaunt frame, is a dark-haired Awoken man with proud features and golden eyes.

"Hadir Karim," Tad says in an almost awed voice. "The Queen said she executed him after what he pulled during the Wolf Rebellion."

A bitter taste fills Soap's mouth. He remembers seeing the carnage left behind by Hadir and his 'loyalists'. Even if you hated eliksni, it was a difficult scene to forget. "Hard to execute yer own brother, I guess. An' now we know why Riley didn't want us on the lower levels."

"Do you have a visual on Graves?" Tad asks. She sounds anxious, and she *never* sounds anxious.

Soap hurriedly flips through cameras again, cursing at the unfriendly user interface.

"I think he's— Wait, I got him!" Soap clicks back one camera and manipulates it to an angle he can see properly from. Graves is moving fast, still checking corners as he goes. Soap almost loses him once, then manages to back up and find him on a different camera.

Just as Graves comes face-to-face with Hadir's Awoken.

"Fuck!" Soap swears. He expects the scene to light up with muzzle flashes and Light grenades, but Hadir and the Vanguard seem to be in some sort of standoff.

"Look, it's Riley!" Tad bumps the screen, pointing out a flicker of motion Soap hadn't caught. Sure enough, the Awoken Lieutenant is pressed back against a wall, out of sight of both Graves and the other Awoken. His gun is drawn and he seems to be listening intently as Hadir and Graves speak.

“Is there audio on this thing?” Soap demands, already fussing with the controls.

“Yes, it’ll take me a minute to patch us through—”

It happens fast: One second Graves and Hadir are having some kind of tense conversation, and the next, Hadir’s gun flashes. Graves goes down, a perfect red wound on his forehead. Its size belies the damage done as Graves hits the floor, crimson blood seeping out around his head like a grisly halo.

“No!” Soap growls, slamming his fist against the console. “Graves, ye bampot, why didn’t ye shoot first! Tad, how’s that algorithm?”

Tad shakes her shell slowly. “It’s not enough time. They’ll make their shuttle before it finishes, and before Graves can rez. Unless Riley gets his ass in gear, that is.”

But Riley remains still, allowing Hadir and his Awoken to pass right by. Soap waits for him to spring out of hiding and start dropping the escaping prisoners from behind. He never does.

“What in the godforsaken—”

And then he sees it. Graves’ Ghost rises from his body, shell opening in preparation for a rez.

Riley’s gun comes up.

Horror clenches in Soap’s chest. He’s seen Guardians die their final death before—during the Red War, during the SIVA crisis—but never before has he felt this kind of powerlessness. He screams Graves’ name, as though that will wake the man, as though that will prevent the pull of a trigger and the path of a bullet and the death of Soap’s Vanguard, his mentor, his *friend*.

He doesn’t watch it happen. He’s already out the door, leaping the railing like Graves had done, ignoring the fire he takes from the regrouping prisoners. If he can make it there—if Riley hesitates—if Soap had misunderstood what was happening on the grainy security feed—

He falls, air shrieking past his ears, his heart in his stomach, Tad pleading in the back of his mind.

There’s a single gunshot.

Now.

“Soap, no!”

Tad materializes in front of Soap’s eyes, knocking hard into the gun he’s leveling at Riley’s head. Soap curses, but doesn’t try to pull the trigger. It wouldn’t matter anyways; the Lightbearer calling himself Ghost has dodged out of sight.

As Soap leaps to his feet, growling in frustration, Tad zips around him to remain in his line of sight.

“Soap, please, just think about this,” she begs. “He’s a Lightbearer now. He doesn’t remember.”

“Aye, well I do!” Soap snaps. But he does lower the gun to hang at his side, still shaky with adrenaline and fury.

Of all the corpses that other Ghost could have raised, she had to pick *Simon Riley*? Soap would laugh if he didn’t think it would come out a scream. He’s always known there’s no justice in life, but maybe he’d still believed there was some in death.

Obviously not.

Fuck, what does he do now? He can put as many bullets as he wants into this “Ghost” character, but at the end of the day, the man will still just rez again. Maybe he can explain the situation to Phantom, convince her to give up on her Lightbearer. He huffs, thinking about the Ghost’s upbeat voice over comms and the pride she’d expressed in her Lightbearer.

You don’t have to kill him, Tad says softly in his mind. *He’s not the same person anymore. He just happens to have the same face.*

Soap lets out a long exhale. Tad’s right, but that doesn’t cure the simmering anger in his gut.

Let’s just get to Price, okay? We can figure out the Simon Riley situation one step at a time.

“Fine,” Soap says at last. His eyes move to where Price had been sheltering, and is startled to see Ghost already there, helping the man to his feet.

“Oi!”

Ghost turns his head to give him an unimpressed stare. He lifts his chin a degree, as though challenging Soap to say more.

And Soap doesn't, because what is there to say? This is my rescue mission, fuck off and find your own? So instead, he grits his teeth and makes his way up a steep incline to where Price and Ghost are engaged in a murmured discussion. Soap lingers on the edge of it, fuming, until Price turns to face him. The man has a hand pressed to his side, where his armor is rent at the seam.

"Yer hurt, Captain?" Soap asks, anger giving way to concern.

An expression of frustration passes over Price's face. The man looks exhausted, Soap notes, with dark shadows beneath his eyes.

"Just a graze," Price dismisses. "I've worked with worse."

"When you still had the Light," Ghost puts in bluntly. "Wounds caused by the Hive always fester, and you don't have a Ghost to patch you up."

Price's eyes blaze with anger. A tightness settles over his face, and he gives a stiff nod. "I'm aware of that."

"Captain..." Soap says quietly. "The knight's dead. Bella's avenged."

Price turns his glare on Soap. "The bloody muppet went Ascendant. You only made it mad."

Soap remembers how the knight went down, vanishing in a flare of green fire. "It can cut into the Ascendant fuckin' Plane? What is this thing?"

"It's called the High Celebrant of Xivu Arath," Ghost says. "It's part of a...larger problem."

The anger in Price's gaze vanishes, replaced by an intense stare. "What do you know of it?"

"Aye, I'd like tae know what's going on as well," Soap says, crossing his arms.

Ghost's gaze flits between the two of them, then settles on Price's wounded side. "I should let my employer explain," he says. He nods to Price. "And you should return to the City for medical attention."

"Never thought I'd agree with this bawbag, but aye, Captain, ye really

should,” Soap interjects before Price can protest. He holds up a hand. “I’ll find out what this...*employer* knows an’ report back.”

Price dips his head with a look of resignation. “Fine. I’ll send you a list of questions I have. And I expect details, Sergeant.”

Soap’s spine straightens. “Aye, sir.”

“Good. Now let’s get out of this bloody hole. I swear, nothing good has ever happened on Luna.”

Price leads the way out, gun still in hand despite his injury. Soap should be watching his every step to ensure the man doesn’t pass out from blood loss, but his attention returns, again and again, to where Ghost brings up the rear. He’s having a murmured discussion with Phantom, and Soap picks up on a few words here and there.

“...will be angry?” Phantom whispers, bobbing nervously as she floats after Ghost. There’s something off about her movements, almost like she’s drunk.

“I’ll handle it,” Ghost says. “He wanted Captain Price; he’ll just have to settle for some other Guardian.”

Soap scoffs at the thought of being Ghost’s consolation prize. He doesn’t like the way Ghost talks about ‘wanting’ Price, either.

With assurances from Price that he can make the jump back to the City on his own, Soap bids him farewell and boards his own jumpship, punching in the coordinates Ghost had relayed to him. He pauses.

“Hey, Tad...who d’you think Ghost’s workin’ for all the way out on the Tangled Shore?”

Tad drifts closer to look at the display. “Oh dear,” she murmurs. “That’s Thieves’ Landing. It’s Roba.”

“Fuck...”

Thieves’ Landing is just as Soap remembers. The buildings are all rounded, dug into the rock of the asteroid like blisters. Everything is made up of eliksni scrapwork, cobbled together out of concrete, rusted metal, and bits of old ships. The atmosphere is heavy with the synthetic smell of ether.

As Soap transmats in, he feels the eyes of several local eliksni snap to

him. None of them cares to bother him as he he strides past hovels, garages, and the Empty Tank bar. He catches the sound of nearby gunfire and purposefully ignores it, instead making for the hidden door to Roba's safehouse.

"Glad to be back?" Tad chirps at him, already knowing the answer.

Soap indulges her with an eye roll and a muttered "away an' bile yer heid". The Tangled Shore, as fascinating and target-rich as it is, is full of nothing but bitter memories. Many of them involving the man that they're here to meet with.

As Soap makes his way through the claustrophobic hallways to the audience chamber, he begins to pick up on a conversation already taking place there.

"...to bring me Price, not these excuses." That was definitely Roba's voice, low and smooth. Like a fucking snake.

Soap's not surprised to hear Ghost answer him, though he's a little taken aback at how deferential his tone is.

"Apologies, Baron. There were complications. The Celebrant—"

"There's no need to repeat yourself. And where is this Guardian, anyways?" There's a creak, and Soap can imagine Roba shifting in his massive, throne-like chair. "Did he take one look at your ugly mug and leave you behind?"

"No, I— He said he'd come speak with you..." Ghost's voice suddenly sounds uncertain, maybe even nervous.

A harsh laugh. "After everything the Guardians have done to you, you're still so preciously naive, aren't you?"

Soap shoulders past the two door guards into the audience chamber, scowling. He's not sure who his scowl is for, Ghost, Roba, or both.

Ghost stands stiffly at the center of the room, Phantom hovering close at hand. In front of them, reclining in stately fashion, Manuel Roba sits in his raised throne, idly rolling a dead Ghost between his fingers. Soap had been surprised when he first laid eyes on the man three years ago, expecting the Baron of the Shore to be eliksni like his minions. Instead, Roba is human—at least, Soap thinks darkly, on the outside—with a bulky physique that speaks to both strength and indulgence. He wears City-made clothing, tailored well, and a

holstered .44 magnum. Here on his home turf, Roba exudes a cool, threatening aura. Soap doesn't think he's ever seen the man leave his chair.

Dark eyes land on Soap as he enters, and a slow smile stretches across Roba's face. "I'll be damned. Looks like you still have uses after all, *mi fantasmito*."

Ghost turns, and though he's wearing a new skull balaclava, Soap can still see the flicker of relief in his eyes when they land on him.

"Not just any Guardian, either!" Roba sounds pleased now, and he holds out a hand to Soap. "The very Hero of the Red War, John MacTavish! Welcome back to my humble abode, Sergeant."

Ghost stiffens slightly as Soap moves past him. Soap can feel those amber eyes boring into him as he reluctantly shakes Roba's fleshy hand.

"Good tae see the Shore still in one piece, Roba," Soap says, drawing back as quickly as possible. He spares a glance back at Ghost, whose stare has gone flat and closed off. "...I see you've been makin' friends," Soap hazards. "Unlikely sorta bedfellows, gotta say."

Roba chuckles. "Oh, my Ghost? He's been with us for a little over a year now. I took him in when he needed shelter, and he's decided to remain as my faithful employee. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, sir," Ghost says stiffly.

Soap watches the exchange from a step removed. A slow, creeping sickness begins to grow from the pit of his stomach like a vine.

Roba seems to be dissatisfied with Ghost's response, eyes narrowing ever so slightly. "Go on, then, back to your workshop. I want that lure up and running before the good Sergeant leaves today."

Ghost gives a nod, almost a bow, and steps away, striding out of the audience chamber with Phantom on his heels.

Soap lets out a long breath. He turns to Roba, questions churning in his gut. "How long—?"

"Three years, or so he tells me," Roba says with a chuckle. "I'd wager good glimmer that he was raised only a few weeks after the... unfortunate business with Hadir. Don't worry, he remembers nothing.

Not even the last face he ever saw, eh?"

Soap's hand brushes the holster at his hip. Even after all this time, he can't bring himself to part with Graves' hand cannon. The gun that avenged his murder.

"And ye keep him around for...what, the irony?" Soap demands. "Coulda let the City know. Hell, coulda let the Queen know."

Roba gives a disapproving tut and sits forward in his seat. "Surely you're not so blinded by vengeful fantasies as to look past the incredible asset that he is. He may not remember being Simon Riley, but he has all of the Lieutenant's old skills and then some. Trust me, Sergeant, that's a piece anyone would want in their collection."

The analogy only serves to strengthen the sick feeling in Soap's gut. "And when he decides he'd rather belong tae himself?"

"Your concern for me is touching, Sergeant. But unnecessary. I have... certain insurance against that eventuality." Roba's smile is bright and knowing, as if he and Soap are sharing some private joke. Before Soap can guess what exactly that means, Roba leans back again, steepling his hands. "Now, enough about him. Ghost tells me you encountered the High Celebrant during your little mission. Is that correct?"

Soap hums. "Big scary Hive fucker? Scar on his face, sword made of bones? 'Encountered' is one word for it." He pauses, then without really knowing why, he adds, "Yer Ghost saved me a rez. He would've had the shite if it hadn't gone Ascendant."

"So he failed again?" Roba muses, seeming unimpressed. He nods down at Soap. "Did you hear its voice?"

Soap swallows, remembering the battle-song in his veins and the echoing words in his mind. "Aye. Other people get that around the beastie, too?"

"More and more frequently," Roba huffs. "This High Celebrant can infect others with its malice and bloodlust. Not only that, but the damn thing keeps planting spires all over the system. Like radio towers, all broadcasting the same signal."

Tad twitches in alarm. "It's corrupting warriors to fight for Xivu Arath."

"Yes, and I'm losing men by the skiff-full," Roba grumbles. "If the

Celebrant was on your Luna, it won't be long before it's targeting Earth, too."

Soap swallows down a rising feeling of panic. "If it manages to infect even one Guardian..."

"Just imagine the mayhem," Roba chuckles. "Amusing, perhaps, but bad for business." He crosses his arms. "I want these spires off my Shore, Sergeant. And I want that thing's head. You do that for me, and I'll see you richly rewarded." A smirk lifts his lips. "Maybe save humanity too, while you're at it. I would so hate to lose all those City-made liquors."

Soap scoffs. "I'm not doing this fer you, but...fine. I'll look into this Celebrant character. Price will want to help, too, once he's patched up. I don't know how much more manpower the Vanguard has available right now."

"Yes, with your little war on Europa," Roba sighs. "I suppose the three of you will suffice."

Soap blinks at him. "Three?"

"Oh, yes," Roba says, leaning forward with an expression Soap would have called a leer. "You'll be working with *mi fantasmito*. He is, after all, the foremost expert on this Celebrant business. He's the only one of my men I can trust not to lose his mind around those damn spires, too." At Soap's answering scowl, Roba gives him a sickeningly fake smile. "You wouldn't doom the human race over a petty grudge, would you?"

Tad gives him a mental nudge, as though Soap needs it. "Fine," he snaps. "I'll work with...*Ghost* for as long as I have to."

Roba waves a hand, and Soap knows he's being dismissed. "Go on, then, speak to him. Oh, and..." He gives Soap that same knowing look that makes Soap want to scrub himself clean in the nearest shower. "If you need to take out your anger on that pretty face, I'll understand. I'll even give you a discount."

The sick feeling quietly breaks into full bloom. Soap tries not to run from the audience chamber, but Roba's laugh still follows him out into the hallway.

Chapter End Notes

Please if anyone actually speaks Spanish, can you tell me if I fucked up with Roba's pet name for Ghost? Spider calls Crow his "little bird" and I wanted something like that but I am not a native or even fluent speaker.

also yes Farah is taking the role of Mara Sov. yes it was partially because their names rhymed.

GLOSSARY FOR NON-DESTINY PLAYERS

Ascendant Plane - A dark, confusing reality that coexists alongside the material plane. Can be used to travel vast distances, create pocket realities, and even safeguard against death. Commonly manipulated by both the Hive and the Awoken.

Awoken Queen - Farah Karim, leader of the Reefborn Awoken. Not a Lightbearer, but rumored to possess uncanny abilities.

Cabal - An interstellar empire of Absolute Units. Recently clashed with the Last City in a series of battles known as the Red War.

Ether - A white, gaseous substance required for eliksni survival.

Hive God - Immensely powerful and immeasurably old Hive with access to the Ascendant Plane and semi-immortality. Soap killed one once.

Xivu Arath - The Hive God of War.

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